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ABSTRACT

This research project began as a quest to investigate more effective ways of addressing the needs of Developmental Reading and Writing students by using non-traditional pedagogies. (By non-traditional pedagogies, the paper means an escape from the traditional model in higher education of addressing reading and writing as two separate content areas.) Traditionally, students enrolled in two separate developmental reading and writing classes as determined by their scores on the Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP) test. This is a state mandated and administered test in reading, and writing, and mathematics. Students who do not pass the test are required to enroll in developmental (non-credit) courses until they are able to successfully pass all three content areas. In the past, the majority (79%) of developmental students could not break the cycle of failure. Furthermore, such students were in jeopardy of performing poorly in academic classes across the university. The paper centers on a theoretical discussion of the relationship between language and thought which lays the foundation for three perspectives vital to this study: Connecting Reading and Writing, Critical Literacy, and Feminist Theory. It argues that these three perspectives provide a useful framework to test the assumptions, design curriculum, and develop classroom methods to better address student needs. The second half of the paper concentrates on how these three perspectives guided instructors' decision-making and applications in the classroom. (Contains about 50 references and a table of data.) (Author/SC)

A Search for Non-Traditional Pedagogies in Teaching Developmental Reading And Writing

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Abstract

This research project began as a quest to investigate more effective ways of addressing the needs of our Developmental Reading and Writing students by using non-traditional pedagogies. (By non-traditional pedagogies, we mean an escape from the traditional model in higher education of addressing reading and writing as two separate content areas.) Traditionally, students enrolled in two separate developmental reading and writing classes as determined by their scores on the Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP) test. This is a state mandated and administered test in reading, writing, and mathematics. Students who do not pass the test are required to enroll in developmental (non-credit) courses until they are able to successfully pass all three content areas. In the past, the majority (79%) of developmental students could not break the cycle of failure. Furthermore, such students were in jeopardy of performing poorly in academic classes across the university.

The paper centers on a theoretical discussion of the relationship between language and thoughtwhich lays the foundation for three perspectives vital to this studyConnecting Reading andWriting, Critical Literacy, and Feminist Theory. We argue that these three perspectives provide a useful framework to test our assumptions, design curriculum, and develop classroom methods to better address the needs of our students. The second half of the paper concentrates on how these three perspectives guided us in our decision-making and applications in the classroom.

A Search for Non-Traditional Pedagogies in Teaching Developmental Reading And Writing

Introduction

A deep fog of passivity and apathy covered the room. Many of its occupants hid behind caps and coats as they slipped low in their chairs. Few eyes ascended avoiding any direct contact. Distinct groups emerged. Two males sat in the front with no contact, no comments, and no ambition. They dropped out by mid-semester. To the left, four males solidified a group somewhere between apathy and hope. Three Asian students sat quietly to the right side and stumbled with the language but understood the content. Two additional groups sat at tables in the back. Most spoke of large ambitions. One male declared that he wanted to be a sports journalist yet could not develop and extend ideas in written form. Next to him sat a student who wanted to become a counselor. Her frequent outbursts interrupted class. Several students had dyslexia. All read by moving their lips. Some still used fingers as pointers for words. One student fell asleep every time he read. Most read at a fourth grade reading level. No one wanted to attend a developmental class at the university. No one wanted to be there. As instructors, we wondered why we had agreed to take on this team-teaching assignment.

Much of the current literacy research paints a bleak picture of our educational system. The National Assessment of Education Progress

(NAEP) reported that many young adults do not have the skills to meet the demands of daily life (Kirch & Jungeblut, 1986). A recent survey confirms that American students over the last two decades lack critical and analytic literacy skills (Mullins et al., 1990). Yet, many young adults, who struggle with such issues, still have aspirations of going to college. This paper will examine how two instructors, with the help of one graduate assistant, searched for non-traditional pedagogies to accelerate literacy for those who have entered the university and found only a cycle of despair.

During the past school year at a state supported university, we taught Developmental Reading and Writing using non-traditional pedagogies to investigate more effective ways of addressing the needs of our students. (By non-traditional pedagogies, we mean an escape from the traditional model in higher education of addressing reading and writing as two separate disciplines with no theoretical linkages.) We knew that the number of Developmental Reading and Writing Classes were increasing in many institutions of higher education, not just at the community college level. Our research began as a desire to create a joint class for students traditionally enrolled in separate developmental reading and writing courses, as determined by their scores on the TASP (Texas Academic Skills Program). This is a state mandated and administered test in reading, writing, and mathematics. Students who do not pass the test are required to enroll in developmental (non-credit) courses until they are able to successfully pass all three content areas.

Linking the classes allowed us to test our assumptions about reading and writing and present students with a model of collaboration between two instructors from two different departments. Furthermore, we investigated this model through our graduate assistant who quickly

became a conduit between the students and the instructors. We particularly wanted to focus on interactive, collaborative models to provide the students with a different classroom climate than they had previously experienced. By linking the two classes, we were able to meet with the students for a three hour block, twice a week, and provide two instructors and one graduate assistant for the twenty students who enrolled. We wanted to see if such changes would be more beneficial for our students.

Traditionally our reading and writing courses have been taught separately, in two different colleges, in two content areas. Like most institutions of higher learning around the country, our developmental reading courses are part of the Reading Department in the College of Education; whereas, our writing classes are located in the English Department of the College of Liberal Arts. The results were that too often students enrolled in developmental courses repeatedly without passing the TASP. In a survey conducted during the fall and spring semesters, we found that 79% of the students had previously taken a development course.

Whether such courses are offered down the corridor from one another or across campuses, the connections between reading and writing continue to be tenuous in practice. Huot (1988) investigated reading and writing instruction in colleges across the country and found that 83% of the respondents reported that reading and writing were taught seperately. Huot found in his survey that writing is primarily linked to English Departments (71%); while reading has a variety of locations in English (25%), Education (27%, and other departments (47%) such as developmental studies or special services. It appears that reading and writing taught as divergent content continues to be a common practice in

higher education devoid of the influences of Whole Language, Integrated Language Teaching, Thematic Units, and Authentic Assessment. We concurred that the present curricular framework of placing such students in separate developmental classes had not worked; therefore, we investigated non-traditional pedagogies to provide more meaningful activities so as to accelerate literacy.

Few studies in the literature helped to guide our efforts. Of all of the research in the last twenty years, the early landmark study by Shaughnessy (1977) in *Errors and Expectations* provided a recount of her work with basic writing students at City College in New York. As a result of the controversial open admissions policy, Shaughnessy described many of these student who brought defeatist attitudes from years of trauncy, poor grades, and little motivation. Shaughnessy found that such basic writers were not failures but could be described as beginners who must learn to dominate the codes of literacy required at the university level. Thus, her account documents her observations, students' coding errors, and suggested methods to improve the conventions of syntax, vocabulary, organization, spelling, and punctuation. Shaughnessy concludes that the best programs are created with the solid belief that academic competencies can be acquired at any age in programs that need to be developed by teachers in response to the needs of students. Such a ground-breaking study gave us hope.

Who were our students?

To effectively develop pedagogical methods for our students, we needed to know something about their background. Though the nature of developmental students may change over the years, such a profile must be

aggregated according to the institution (Troyka, 1987). Therefore, we surveyed 175 students in the fall and spring semesters, during the first week of classes, who enrolled in either / both Developmental Reading and Developmental Writing. The results of the profile indicated the expected:

83% of students were Freshman,

51% of students were male,

92% of students were 22 or younger, and

87% of students regarded English as their native language.

These findings were hardly unexpected; however, the survey also provided more significant background information. First, we learned that the vast majority of our students were traditional college students, recent Texas high school graduates, and represented an even distribution among college majors. Second, although the general population of university students represents only 12% minorities, students in developmental courses represented 68%. The breakdown in ethnicity indicated: 32% Anglo, 48% African American, 8% Hispanic, 5% Asian, and 7% other. Thus, minority students enrolled in developmental courses represented approximately six times the university enrollment. Third, we discovered that these students performed poorly on other standardized tests such as the SAT where 22% averaged below 700 and 60% scored below 900. Fourth, the most significant fact that made us consider non-traditional pedagogy was the large number of students caught in this cycle of failure. Over half the students enrolled (54%) were taking the classes for the second time, and 25% had taken it twice or more. It was not unusual to find students who had taken the class more than five times (12%). Furthermore, each semester our developmental enrollments have doubled.

Before our pedagogical applications can be addressed, a theoretical discussion follows which lays the foundation for three perspectives: Connecting Reading and Writing, Critical Literacy, and Feminist Theory. It will be argued that these three perspectives provide a useful framework to test our assumptions, design curriculum, and develop methods to better address the needs of our students.

Theoretical Framework

Connecting Reading and Writing

Linking reading and writing allowed us to test several popular assumptions about the interactive nature of the reading (McCormick et al., 1987; Butler & Turnbill, 1984; Smith, 1971) and writing process (Elbow, 1973; Elbow & Belanoff, 1995; Murray, 1987). Although such assumptions may be well recognized in many communities of reading and writing, most colleges across the country still teach reading and writing separately as previously indicated. Therefore, the following theoretical assumptions will be examined in the college classroom before discussing theory-into-practice: 1.) Reading and writing are inextricably connected; 2.) Reading and writing should be seen within the context of meaning-making; and 3.) Both reading and writing involve recursive stages of development.

Several recent theorists (Atwell,1987; Butler & Turbill 1984; Graves, 1991; Heller,1989; Murray,1987; Shanahan,1988; Smith & Dahl,1984; and Tway,1985) have conferred that reading and writing are inextricably linked. Many parallels help to shape this argument: 1.) Both reading and writing are active processes. 2.) Both use recursive versus linear processes to generate understanding. 3.) Both use prior knowledge of topic to create a background for understanding. 4.) Both produce expectations

based on previous experiences, purpose, and format. 5.) Both adhere to the conventions, punctuation, and format of language. 6.) Both participate in an interactive nature that must take into account the prior knowledge, purpose of activity, personal experiences, educational background, and relevancy of material. Although prior theory dictated that the focus of reading and writing was a product to be obtained, current theory centers on processes which may involve activating existing knowledge, brainstorming, predicting, gathering, confirming, and retrieving information.

Central to both reading and writing is the cognitive process of constructing meaning. Vygotsky (1962) discussed the importance of how each person brings their own experiences and interpretations of meaning to words. The same happens when readers construct meaning through an interactive process which includes the reader's background, the message conveyed, and the purpose for which the reader examines the text (Rumelhart, 1977 & Smith, 1973). Comprehending the message requires readers to construct meaning, some of which the writer intended and some of which the reader brings by way of experiences (Rosenblatt, 1978,1983). On the other hand, writers construct meaning through knowledge of language and thought applied to paper. Writers must breakdown thought and build-up of words to be placed on paper for oneself or an intended audience. Vygotsky (1978) explained that writing begins with "inner speech" that is defined as a cognitive process in oral and written communication as "speech for oneself" (p. 225). Inner speech generates from one word or phrase that must get translated into a more elaborate structure for writing that is then pulled apart, analyzed, and reworked into more explicit meaning. Written communication comes when the writer

translates inner speech into a written context that can be understood linguistically and socially.

Both reading and writing involve active stages of development. In reading, the stages involve process terms -- pre-reading, reading, and post-reading. During pre-reading, students prepare to read by creating motivation, assessing prior knowledge, setting purposes for reading, and making predictions. While reading, students construct meaning, check for understanding, and confirm or deny their predictions. After reading, students examine what they have read for clarity when needed. In writing, the process involves similar stages. Like the highly successful Writing Projects (Bay Area Writing Project, New Jersey Writing Project, and Texas Writing Project), writers learn to write through stages such as prewriting, writing, editing, and publishing. Such stages are not linear or fixed but are recursive and constantly changing.

Theory-into-Practice

Connecting reading and writing provides a useful framework to design curriculum, from the selection of books to the required assignments. Two texts played an important role. First, the class received weekly editions of *Newsweek* placed on desks before students entered the room. Many students arrived early to scan the latest news. Each week, several articles became the focal point for activities. We also found that the magazine graphics, photographs, and cartoons made the material less intimidating and more user-friendly than college texts. A second text, Brandon (1995), *Paragraphs & Essays,* provided reference material for the writing of papers. Both texts complimented the other as we read and responded to the high interest articles.

A tool that served to integrate reading and writing was the Learning Log, often associated with journals and writing-to-learn. The set-up of the Learning Logs was simple. During Sustained Silent Reading, students selected articles to read from the class library, mainly made up of current magazines. They wrote summaries of each article they read, noted questions, and wrote reactions by relating the article to an experience, opinion, evaluation, comparison, or analysis. Furthermore, students needed to record their reading strategy and why they used it. (This helped to reinforce study skills and metacognitive strategies.) Thus, the Learning Log established a place for students to show growth over the course of the semester, to record active reading strategies, to record thoughts, and to choose materials. As instructors, we responded to learning logs in the role that Britton (1987) called "trusted adult" by writing informal comments and asking questions to further students' thinking.

Students needed to learn to construct meaning through stages in reading and writing. In reading, students exhibited greater mastery of the text by using pre-reading activities to activate interest. First, we focused on pre-reading activities that involved asking and answering questions through The Anticipation Guide , The Directed Reading-Thinking Activity, The Directed Inquiry Activity, and the Survey Technique (Moore et al, 1989). Students further learned to skim, scan, and preview material to make predictions before reading through the Survey / Question / Read / Recite / Review Approach (SQ3R) . During the reading stage, students became active readers to construct meaning by taking notes in the margins, highlighting main ideas, noting questions, underlining, marking, and circling important words and passages in the text. Students also

enjoyed using Study Guides (Wood et al, 1992) which provided scaffolding or support that enabled students to work with increasingly abstract ideas. Finally, post-reading activities involved writing learning logs, answering study questions, and writing formal essays.

During the last three weeks of the semester, students polished their portfolios in a culminating activity. From the beginning, our students wrote something every class period whether it was an informal response to a reading, peer editing, or related to one of their six major papers. However, greater emphasis was placed on these six essays of approximately 500 words in length, the same requirement as the TASP writing sample. Thus, the portfolio consisted of: 1.) All of the essays written during the semester, 2.) One selected essay which needed to be extended and revised , and 3.) An explanation of why this essay was selected and how the essay was revised. During these final weeks, we worked more extensively with helping students to edit their papers for publication. During the final week, students presented their portfolios to the class and were given the option to read their paper aloud or talk about why they had decided to revise and how they had changed their essay. (The Portfolio will be discussed further in Feminist Theory-into-Practice.)

In summary, classroom activities involved integrating reading and writing, creating a context for meaning, and focusing on processes. The following sample activity, "Hoop Dreams" (*Newsweek*, March 20, 1995, pp. 48-56) follows reading into writing by using an Anticipation Guide to arouse interest, a Study Guide to gather information, and a post writing activity as a follow-up:

Insert Table 1 about here

A Freirian Model of Critical Literacy

Critical Pedagogy provided us with a conceptual framework for understanding the structural and contextual forces that impact many students who are caught in a cycle of failure. McLaren (1989, p.16) states that critical pedagogues --such as Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Maxine Greene, Jane Gaskell, Michael Apple, Roger Simon, Joel Spring, Paul Willis, Tom Popkewitz--generally strive for a dual purpose: "to empower the powerless" and "to transform existing social inequalities and injustices" in order to produce active, democratic citizens. Freire and Macedo (1987) advance this notion to ask at what price can a society function without individuals who are critically literate? The Freirean approach focuses on literacy from the perspective of the learner's cultural and personal experiences. Named for the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, this paradigm has taken theory-into-action by developing literacy programs for many urban and rural community-based organizations, as well as many third world nations in Latin America and Africa. Freire's model of literacy begins with the power of the word in relation to dialogue, discourse, and real world concerns. Thus, language holds power and meaning in which one can examine their thoughts, beliefs, perceptions, assumptions, and experiences. The following assumptions will be explored from a Freirean perspective: 1.) Literacy involves the generative power of language and thought as a vehicle to make meaning; 2.) Literacy involves more than reading and writing; it is a critical interpretation & examination of the world.

Freire (1968, 1985) believes that literacy begins with the generative power of language and thought. Though he states that the ability to produce words is innate, words generate meaning only after they have been codified into a generative system of logic. Berthoff (1987) explains how Freire sees this process of language as a simultaneous transition between language and meaning,

> Freire's pedagogy is founded on a philosophical understanding of this generative power of language. When we speak, the discursive power of language--its tendency toward syntax--brings thought along with it. We don't think our thoughts and then put them into words; we say and mean simultaneously. Utterance and meaning making are simultaneous and correlative. (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. xiv)

According to Freire, the need for literacy first comes for the individual through the need to focus on important themes in relation to one's life; whereas, this content becomes the vehicle to further literacy development. Furthermore, finding relevant content helps students to process information in more meaningful ways. Freire's approach has been described as "deeply contextualized" (Chacoff, 1989, p. 49) because learning to read and write comes from meaningful discussions. Therefore, the formal study of language plays a more modest role to the learners' need to develop literacy to solve problems. This approach to literacy allows one to interpret language and literacy in relation to one's critical needs.

A second need for literacy envelopes a more expansive interpretation and examination of the world. This individual creates a need for more critical literacy that can be seen as a way to counter inequalities, to recapture one's own history, to interpret one's own

experiences, to dialogue with others, and to develop a critical consciousness that has the potential for social transformation. Freire believes that such an awareness can take on an emancipatory literacy in which comprehending the written word can lead to a social transformation of the individual and society. Freire explains, "[When] we can name the world and thus hold it in mind, we can reflect on its meaning and imagine a changed world [in which we] . . . mak[e] choices to bring about further transformations" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. xv).

Many educators who have read the works of Freire have applied his theory of literacy to the classroom. Several critical theorists have specifically applied his work to the college classroom (Shor, 1987; Finlay & Faith,1987; Fiore & Elsasser , 1987). Several organizations in the United States have applied Freire's model of literacy such as the Hispanic Literacy Council in Chicago, Bronx Educational Services, Union Settlement House, and Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers in Los Angeles.

Theory-into-Practice

By putting theory-into-practice, we devoted the semester to proving a context for the generative power of language and thought to help students create meaning. Often this involved students bringing personal meaning to language by examining their thoughts, beliefs, perceptions, experiences, assumptions, and understanding about the world around them. We knew that this was not just a critical understanding for the process of reading and writing, but for the mastery of the TASP test and university coursework as well.

Literacy involves naming the world through symbols (words) and applying meaning simultaneously. Yet we noticed that many of our

developmental students could not name the important symbols of university life and services provided by the university. Students reported that they felt lost in the university culture and not part of the university community. Research on marginal students shows that they are often unconnected with the university environment (Bartholmae, 1987). In one of the major papers, we had the students interview a university administrator or staff person to find out what services were offered. Students selected any official on campus from a master list which included the president of the university, deans of colleges, directors of the university police force, financial aid directors, career center counselors, and recreational sports directors. As a class, the students developed a series of questions in advance. Interviews were conducted, answers recorded, and papers written. This enlarged the students' knowledge, not only of the opportunities available at the university, but it provided them with practice on how to gather and use information from a variety of sources to produce a piece of writing to be read by others.

We knew that literacy involved a critical interpretation & examination of the world needed to respond to the social and political questions used as TASP prompts. An example of such a prompt would be the following: "Explain your stance on affirmative action. How have women benefited from affirmative action?" We found that students during most of the prompts did poorly simply because they had no knowledge of the question or a background to answer the question. Therefore, we worked hard to elicit responses from students to current issues discussed in *Newsweek*. We made the assumption that a popular news magazine would encourage students to think about current events through reading and writing as a vehicle to a critical examination of the world. The magazine

provided great fodder for many oral discussions as a prerequisite to reading and writing activities.

Students were also encouraged in critical literacy to see how much their world expanded through active reading and writing strategies. For example, students were asked to do an Anticipation Guide to determine how much they knew about the topic before and after reading. If students gained more knowledge and understanding after reading, they were asked to write how their understanding had changed. This proved to be a great opportunity to operationalize critical literacy.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory offered us a teaching perspective that advocates democratizing the classroom, legitimizing students feelings and emotions, recognizing the impact of personal experiences on learning, building a community of all learners, and recognizing the need for cooperative learning (Boardman, 1991; Wakai, 1994). These student- centered approaches draw on empowering the individual and the community of learners as central to the development of the learners. Furthermore, feminist theory encourages students to develop their own voices through language and literacy (Ratcliffe, 1994). Bannister (1993) cites the importance of dialog, "connected knowing," and interrelationships as part of the important body of feminist theory.

What is of particular interest to us in this study is that feminist pedagogy is not limited to the study of women, but it has a greater application to a range of both male and female concerns (Maher & Tetreault, 1994). We chose feminist theory as a departure from the traditional western perspective that has obscured female perspectives in

place of a societal standard of competition and achievement where most students fall short. Our students --both female and male-- represented a wide variety of cultural, economic, and language minorities that had learned to become more docile, passive, and cooperative learners. Our students did not understand the role of competition and individual scholarship that the university was asking them to play.

Perhaps, part of feminist theory is a reaction against the structural and competitive forces of traditional western thought, where learning becomes deconstructualized and finite (Boardman, 1991). Feminist theory is akin to the many assumptions from the social-phenomenological approach in which schooling and classroom interactions are viewed within a theory of a social reality. Meaning is actively constructed and created interactively by individuals within a situation. Within the context of education, knowledge is not seen as a fixed absolute, but as a constructed reality by the student. Within this constructed reality is an ever-changing subjective view of one's role within the microcosm / macrocosm in which s/he participates. Such a perspective is beginning to leave its mark on curriculum theorists who focus on a variety of voices from different gender, social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Thus, feminist theory provided several needed assumptions for this study that represented the following shift in thinking: 1.) Feelings and emotions are central to the learning process; 2.) Students need to feel that they are part of the democratic, decision-making process; 3.) Collaborative methods of knowing are as valid as individual ways of knowing.

Feminist theory advocates legitimizing feelings and emotions of students as central to learning (Wakai, 1994). This approach addresses the affective domain to connect learning with personal experience. It is

here that students can examine their own lives, form opinions, and use experience to connect their personal to their academic lives. As in critical theory, students must be given the opportunities to find ways to make learning personally meaningful. Maher and Rathbone (1986) suggest that educators design curriculum and lessons built on pupils' personal background and interests. Several of the following examples give students such opportunities. First, teachers who conference with students, one-on-one can provide direct communication and opportunities for students to legitimize feelings. Second, journals or learning logs supply a safe place for students to express feelings and to communicate directly with the instructor. Also, such practices have the additional benefit of helping students to connect / interpret / define / conceptualize / compare / contrast / analyze / classify / evaluate old constructs of knowledge into new constructs for the purposes of understanding, changing, and storing information. Third, personal essays and opinion papers help students to legitimize feelings and test knowledge. Fourth, many works of fiction often mirror the feelings and emotions of young adults and help them to articulate what they feel. Fifth, portfolios help students to create a reflection of themselves through established goals, representation of work, and decisions on what to include. Such practices are essential to student development (Wakai, 1994).

Feminist theory advocates democratizing the classroom to create a sense of a community of learners. Thus, the rationale found in feminist pedagogy is to make classroom learning more meaningful. Many of the same central themes can be found in the writings of John Dewey and Paulo Freire -- the role of education as a preparation for life, the role of democracy in the classroom, the classroom as a microcosm for examining

the society-at-large, and the role of schools as agents to produce active citizens. If such students are perceived as passive, it is important that we help our students establish a sense of authority, of voice, of leadership within the classroom. Examples of theory-into-practice may include: taking seriously the opinions of students, engaging students in classroom decision-making, giving students' choices within the constructs of assignments, and applying transfer of learning to the real world as they see it.

Feminist theory advocates cooperative learning. Such theory builds on much of the successful work in classrooms in which pupils are placed in small groups for the purpose of sharing work and problem-solving (see Johnson and Johnson, 1990).

Gilligan (1982) explains that women develop contextual reasoning through interpersonal relationships. Instead of advocating the traditional method of lecture by an authority, the pedagogy of feminist theory suggests that learning be collaborative, cooperative, and interactive through small and large group discussions.

Furthermore, collaborative practices are essential for both the instructors and the students (Maher and Rathbone, 1986).

Theory-into-Practice

As instructors, we worked hard to design curriculum and materials that would allow students to articulate their feelings and emotions as a conduit to the learning process. First, we held weekly conferences to listen to the concerns, the goals, and stumbling blocks that students experienced. Such a meeting helped to legitimize students feelings and strengthen bridges of trust. During these conferences, the instructors met

individually with each student to answer questions, review materials, chart progress, and provide responses to reading and writing activities. Consequently, students enjoyed the opportunity to have individual contact with the instructors and tutoring when needed. These conferences also provided students with a chance to give the instructors feedback on the course and the assignments. Furthermore, students completed periodic summary statements about the instruction, pace, and relevance of lessons. The feedback allowed us to continue to modify the curriculum. For example,three weeks into the class, the students reported that they felt that more emphasis was given to reading than writing. Students' comments allowed us to make some alterations.

Community-building was emphasized throughout the semester. First, we needed to model collaboration as instructors. We taught the course collaboratively to show the multiple perspectives of two females instructors from two different disciplines who designed a curriculum to reflect an interactive model for our students. Our past experience had shown us that the students could be quite apathetic in the classroom; therefore, a teacher-centered approach was out of the question for students who had been passive learners for years. We believed that a collaboration that began with the instructors would ease student apathy and force the classroom to be more responsive. Since all three instructors were women, we knew that we wanted to incorporate collaboration, particularly since the class was team taught by two professors with a graduate researcher as liaison. We often met once a week formally to discuss the direction of the class, design further activities, modify lessons, and record observations.

In the classroom, we participated as instructors in the reading and writing activities and modeled interactive classroom participation. Although we had fears that the students might allow us to carry the work of the class, we ultimately found that the small, intimate nature of the class allowed us to interact informally with the students and encourage their own participation. In some cases, by participating in the activities ourselves, we could see problems with instructions and ways in which the instruction was communicated clearly. Because our assumed roles were that of participants, we planned interactive activities to keep ourselves, as well as our students, engaged. Such activities included debates on controversial topics, collaborative problem-solving activities, blackboard activities, students sharing work with others on overhead, and frequent discussions on why we chose one strategy over another in reading and writing.

Furthermore, the collaborative role of our graduate assistant proved to be beneficial for many reasons. She provided an important connection between professors and students. First, as an African American graduate student in contrast to our Anglo American perspective, she articulated which students had personal problems, which activities needed further extensions, and which students would benefit by a tutorial. One student opted to meet with her twice a week for a tutorial since he had already taken the class five times. (Our student finally passed the TASP test.) Second, as a researcher, she provided immediate feedback after each lesson by making observations on what worked and what did not work. She participated in class discussions, projects, and activities. Based on her observations, we modified many lessons and extended others. Third, she helped lessen the traditional pressures of teaching by grading papers,

conferencing with students, answering questions, monitoring work, and managing discipline problems. Occasionally she practiced her skills as an instructor. Finally, our graduate assistant felt that she benefited most from the collaboration. She expressed that as an apprentice, she gained knowledge about teaching from the mentorship of two professors. From her work with students, she can now step into her own classroom with more confidence that she gained through her apprenticeship. Currently, she teaches her own developmental courses and looks at her own teaching through the eyes of a researcher and problem-solver to find ways to address the needs of students.

Finally, as students played an active role in the classroom, we devised ways to give them as much freedom as we could within the confines of the objectives and TASP test preparation. For many assignments, students chose their own topics. Although some of the writing topics were taken from TASP test prompts, we encouraged students to make-up other similar questions to explore. Students and instructors then shared the results of their interpretations and responses with others.

During most classes, we tried to schedule time for students to choose any reading selections and record in their Reading Logs. They could bring in their own materials, or they could select from the popular magazines and novels that were available in the classroom library. Students selected reading materials that held their interest, such as popular magazines, newspapers, comic books, auto mechanic manuals, and novels. Often, the instructors read with students to model active reading strategies. Favorites such as *Sports Illustrated* and *Ebony* would disappear

permanently from the library. As instructors, we would be secretly ecstatic.

Furthermore, the portfolio marked continuous growth and student choice. As previously stated, during the final three weeks of the class, students chose two essays to revise and polish. After the students had revised their essays under the guidance of the instructors and other members of the class, students presented their work. We believe that this helped give them confidence about their writing and encouraged reflection about themselves as writers. The students remained attentive and respectful as each student presented their work to the class. Cookies and soft drinks provided a more festive atmosphere and encouraged a feeling of informality during presentations. Students showed much pride in their choices, explanations, and growing maturity as writers.

Conclusions

What did we accomplish? Of the twenty students who enrolled in the class, nine students passed the reading and writing section without further remediation. One student passed only the writing section, and two passed only the reading section. For the remaining eight students, we have no indication that they retook the TASP test, because they are no longer enrolled at the university. As compared to the our prior findings that indicated that 79% of the students repeated developmental courses, our success rate proved to show that 60% of our students passed at least one of the TASP sections; while, of those students, 45% passed both. The rest vanished. While we were disappointed to see so many students choose to abandon their education, we do feel that we broke the cycle of failure for many students who too often repeated remedial courses.

Several other conclusions can be made which concur with the findings of Traub (1994). Of the nine students who passed, all worked hard to practice active reading and process writing strategies -- particularly revision. Those students who succeeded had very specific goals and believed that they had control of their destinies. These students worked hard on their own to complete assignments and further their understanding. They appeared to be more motivated. On the other hand, the least successful students disengaged and became distracted easily during class. Often these students had little understanding of the academic requirements and rigors of college life. Hard work was never equated with academic success. Such students showed frustration easily, looked for short cuts, and turned in work in haste if at all.

The complexity of working with development students should not be under-estimated. Frustration can be as easily experienced by the instructor as well as the students. Although many of us may define the issues differently, Traub (1994) voices many of the dilemmas associated with developmental students:

> There is a fire in my gut that tells me that what we are doing has little to do with education . . . Something has gone wrong here, and the student who arrives at our door with a fourth-grade reading level, and the administrator who herds him into a CSK [College Skills] class of twenty-five students, and the professor who teaches that course, and the committee who designed it, and the curriculum committee which approved it are all locked into a silent contract of fraud . . . . When I document my . . . class [the higher of the two remedial levels, less than 20% of the students can understand the headline 'STUDENT TURNOUT NIL AT GAMES,' I am met with a sympathetic wall of silence. I am told that we are caught in force fields not of our own making -- 'black holes' in the educational sky named politics, the Board of Higher Education,

rotten high schools, dinosaur administrations and racism . . . (p. 82)

These frustrations cannot be overlooked. Today's developmental students are a different breed from those of two decades ago. Instructors are given no packages of instruction or maps to counteract some of the discouraging circumstances. Although the research clearly shows there are no maps for evolving, systemic change (Fullan and Miles, 1992), we had to create our own map to follow as we worked with students. We knew a lot about what students needed on an individual basis and what worked for the group. So, we had to create our map based on our desire to investigate non-traditional pedagogies and our theoretical assumptions that we established.

Even in retrospect, we realized that the map that we created would be in direct conflict with others who make the policy. Fullan and Miles (1992) discuss the problem of all of the complication involved with change. For example, even though we deemed this research to be successful, we could not change the departmental policy of teaching separate reading and writing contents. We could not change the administrators who make these decisions. We could not change the pattern of those who teach these courses – primarily adjunct faculty and graduate students. Such courses traditionally have been given low priority. We could not change the patterns of instruction to more collaborative methods. Finally, we realized that such changes are indeed complex. The number of components and the interdependent connections needed are mind boggling to change institutional, departmental, and curricular policies.

Perhaps, the problem involved the very paradoxical nature of working with developmental courses. Shaughnessy (1977) described part of the Catch 22 that students face -- the poor scores from state-mandated tests, the academic politics of allowing students to enter with little regard for the needs of many students, and the temporary holding tanks established until remediation takes place. Remediation is magically viewed as a point in time when scores on state-mandated tests have been raised. Furthermore, higher education continues to allot few resources for such remediation, to enroll high numbers of minority students, and to place labels on students as "remedial" or "marginal". Shaughnessy states that universities encourage entry of students who are poor and disadvantaged only to give many a fleeting hope of escape to a better life. Finally, though much of the theoretical frameworks connecting reading and writing have changed dramatically in the last twenty years, the university's perception of the developmental student has not changed.

Could we get the same results or better down the road in a new semester? We do not know. We know that the profile and needs of our students would be different, semester to semester. We know that along with our assumptions, it was imperative during this collaboration that we took notes on what worked and what did not work. On the bases of our notes that we collected and analyzed, we were able to revisit our theoretical assumptions and make sound decisions. This process never stopped.

On a self-serving note, we felt we became better educators by working with developmental students. Since we found no cookie-cutter prescriptive approaches, we had to observe students, gather data, and make decisions as a collaborative team of professionals as the semester

progressed. We know that it is important to continue to search for non-traditional pedagogies for the growing numbers of development students who enroll in higher education each year. We know that there is a national movement afoot to remove developmental students from many colleges and universities. Yet, from much of the amentioned current literacy research which paints a bleak picture and the continued public perception that our public schools are not preparing students to be literate adults, we think -- even with the recent teacher guidelines from NCATE and IRA-- there will always be groups of students who will enter such ranks and find they are ill-equipped for higher education.

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Table 1

"Hoop Dreams"

Answer the following questions before you read by checking "yes" or "no." After reading, go through questions again and indicate if your opinion has changed.

___ ___ Do you think that Michael Jordan made the right decision to come back?

___ ___ Did you think that Michael Jordan would ever come back to the NBA?

___ ___ Do you think that Jordan's decision had anything to do with his failing baseball career?

Answer the following questions below:

1. What actions did Jordan take recently to spur speculation that he might return to the NBA?
2. How is Jordan's baseball career going?
3. What few obstacles bar Jordan's return to the NBA? What must he do to overcome obstacles?
4. If Jordan rejoins the NBA permanently, will his endorsements increase? Right now, how many companies does Jordan represent?
5. Jordan represents professional basketball's brightest side. Who is Reginald Lewis, and how does his death illustrate the dark side of the NBA?

Persuasion / Argumentative Paper

Pretend you are a sports writer for the local paper who has been given the assignment of arguing for or against Michael Jordan's return to the NBA. Use your textbook, Chapter 9: Argumentation and Persuasion, as a guide to help you with this paper. Write a rough draft taking one side or another. Although several samples of essay topics on sports are on the back table of the room, you might want to begin by discussing your position with a partner to help you decide how you feel in this issue. We will be around to help you.

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